

Family Service Association of America
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Case Committee
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(mtg 4/25)

Purposes and Functions of Casework Policy Committees

The purpose of the Casework Policy Committee is to recommend to the Board of Directors the program of the agency and the broad policies within which casework services are rendered. The policies should be sufficiently detailed to give clarity and security to the staff, but not so restrictive as to preclude flexibility.

The Committee might, for example, study the advisability of developing a special project to provide services to hard-to-reach families and recommend the establishment of such a project. During its deliberations it would, among other things, define the term "hard-to-reach," determine how many such families need to be served, the effect of such a project on the other services of the agency, the type and amount of co-operative planning that would involve other agencies, agency plans for evaluating the effectiveness of the project, and so on. If the Committee's recommendations were approved by the board, the Casework Policy Committee would then recommend the general policies for the administration of the project. Such policies might include duration of the project, approximate size of caseload, intake policies for selection of families, general interagency co-operative planning, and so on.

A charge to the Committee should be developed by the board which is sufficiently specific to define the desired objectives in accordance with the by-laws and yet be general enough to provide for flexibility in carrying out the responsibilities involved. The charge by the board might include a study of trends in the agency's services; an evaluation of unmet needs in the agency itself and in the community with recommendations regarding these; or a periodic review of casework policies; and so on.

The Committee is a standing committee of the board but the membership may include voting or non-voting individuals from the agency's membership, potential board members, those with special interests or those who have pertinent contributions to make because of their position or experience. It is important, however, that a proper balance be maintained so that decisions remain with members of the board who carry the legal and moral responsibilities for the affairs of the agency. As this committee provides the opportunity to become acquainted with the professional services of the agency more than any other, it is advisable for each board member to serve on this committee at some time, preferably as soon after his election as possible. As in all agency committees, there should be some continuity in the membership, but a balance should be maintained between new and more experienced members.

The size of this committee is frequently larger than that of other board committees and may range from eight to twelve or more members. It should meet regularly, sometimes on a monthly basis. It is helpful if the program can be planned a year in advance, with some provision for flexibility. The president and executive director serve ex-officio with the executive providing consultation and general direction. Subcommittees may be utilized to study special areas and should be utilized instead of separate committees in order to maintain integration.

The chairman should make periodic progress reports to the board on committee activity and the minutes of meetings may be distributed. Recommended policies should be presented in writing and in sufficient detail to allow for an adequate discussion on which to base decisions. The board, in turn, frequently asks the Committee to study and make recommendations on certain program matters under discussion.

There should be a close interrelationship between the Casework Policy Committee and other committees of the board. As examples: the establishment of a new program would require interpretation and perhaps other considerations by the Public Relations Committee. Or the need for additional or specialized staff would involve the Personnel and Finance Committees. Social conditions affecting family life would be brought to the attention of the Public Issues Committee.

To carry out its purpose, the Casework Policy Committee is kept informed by the staff on trends in requests for service and unmet needs as seen in the agency and the community. It becomes acquainted with the services of other agencies in the community, the adequacy of their programs, and the co-operative relationships between agencies. The chairman and other members frequently serve on council committees in liaison capacity between the agency and appropriate planning bodies. Through such activities the members become aware of and participate in total community planning and are thus able to evaluate the program of the agency in relation to those of other agencies and to know the community need for additional services, be aware of any duplication of services, and the advisability for the elimination of services.

All policies should be reviewed periodically to assure they are up to date and effective. The Committee should be informed of the volume and quality of the work of the agency and its staff so that it may be fully aware of the implications for the addition or elimination of services.

The Committee should also be kept informed on the methods used by the staff to evaluate the quality of their work and the methods being used to assure a continuing staff development program. It should know how the psychiatric consultant and other specialists are used and their relation to supervision. It may recommend additional methods for enhancing and evaluating the quality of professional practice.

Disguised case material is presented frequently by the staff to illustrate the kinds of problems under consideration. Budgetary problems may be presented, for example, when policies for financial assistance or fees are under consideration. Several applications may be presented in a discussion of procedures for establishing a waiting list. Cases may also be presented for general information or the Committee may be used to test for community reactions to unusual situations. Although case material is usually presented by members of the staff, the supervisor in consultation with the executive often plans the general content.

CASE COMMITTEE

Since June, 1963, to June, 1964, the Case Committee has met nine times. It is customary for the Case Committee to meet on the second Tuesday of each month to review, discuss, plan and evaluate the casework program of the agency. During this period, the Case Committee looked seriously at the recommendations made by Miss Margaret Murta of Family Service Association of America in her five year study of the agency. The scope of the Case Committee was broadened and the committee, during the past 12 months, has studied the following:

- 1) Has looked at the narcotics situation present in Newark and what part Family Service Bureau can play in providing service to this group. *Miss Farrell Study*
- 2) Reviewed the caseload of the agency and concluded the professional workers were working to capacity.
- 3) Seriously reviewed Dr. Leontine Young's report entitled "Action Project on the Prevention of Family Disorganization" and went on record that, if asked, Family Service Bureau of Newark would participate in the project. *Children's Aid Bureau*
- 4) Reviewed the South Side Project, under consideration for a grant from the federal government and the position Family Service Bureau would take if such monies were forthcoming from the federal government. The Committee invited Mr. Al Meyers of the Welfare Federation to a meeting to discuss the entire South Side Project.
- 5) Discussed the feasibility of opening up branch offices in certain strategic locations within the Newark, Irvington, Belleville and West Hudson areas.
- 6) Finally a client who had received service from the Family Service Bureau during the past year appeared before the Case Committee and discussed how she had been helped and progress made by her and her family.